

House appropriators voted yesterday to block federal tax dollars from going to Alaska's "bridge to nowhere," the \$230 million pork project that would connect a remote island of 50 residents to another remote island.

Rep. Mark Steven Kirk, from a moderate district in the suburbs of Chicago and a rising star in the Republican ranks, has long warned that wasteful spending undermines party's claim to fiscal conservatism. Yesterday, he introduced an amendment to bar federal money from being spent on that particular project.

"Today, taxpayers won and blocked funding for this hugely expensive and unneeded project," Mr. Kirk said after yesterday's vote. Appropriations Committee Chairman Jerry Lewis, California Republican, allowed a voice vote on the amendment during yesterday's meeting to set transportation expenditures. A smattering of support for the project led by Rep. Joe Knollenberg, Michigan Republican, was drowned out by overwhelming opposition.

The project has been the carefully guarded pet of former Senate Appropriations Chairman Ted Stevens, Alaska Republican, who last year threatened to quit the Senate when Sen. Tom Coburn, Oklahoma Republican, tried stripping it out of the transportation bill.

Ultimately, the "earmark" setting the money aside to be used only to build that particular bridge was removed. But Alaska still got the \$230 million and decided to spend it on the project anyway. And Mr. Stevens decided not to quit the Senate.

Yesterday's action in the House Appropriations Committee went one step further and actually prohibits Alaska from spending the federal money on that project.

"Passage of my amendment sends a strong signal to the American people that the time for this expensive style of federal spending has passed," Mr. Kirk said.

The small victory for fiscal discipline comes as conservatives off Capitol Hill demand better fiscal discipline and are taking their case to voters before this fall's elections. Americans for Prosperity yesterday announced plans to spend \$1 million on commercials aimed at stripping the \$14 billion in pork spending that was added to the Senate's "emergency" spending bill to pay for the Iraq war and repairs after Hurricane Katrina.

"Grass-roots taxpayers are sick and tired of having their hard-earned tax dollars wasted on pork-barrel earmarks, and they've started to make their voices heard in Washington," said Americans for Prosperity President Tim Phillips.

Meanwhile, the House voted 389-9 late yesterday to approve \$32 billion for the Department of Homeland Security fiscal 2007 budget, after Republicans turned back a bid by Democrats to restore about \$750 million in counterterrorism funds for major cities.